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Personal File

ANNEX B

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PORTRAIT OF A GERMAN COMMUNIST

1. When we inquired in mine-infested WUERSELEN how many civilians had been killed by mines, MG referred us to the "Grave Digger," a German who daily risks his life digging out victims and making mines innocuous. We were told that the "Grave Digger" does his dangerous work voluntarily and without compensation. His name is JOSEPH MOHREN. That day and the next we spent many hours with MOHREN. He took us through the town, which he knew intimately. He guided us through the RAVENSBURG battlefield, where scores of German soldiers still lay where they had fallen. He led us through bunkers where American soldiers had died and through mine fields which he had not yet de-mined.

2. MOHREN's story is not only that of a strong personality; it may also be indicative of the state of mind of other Germans like him-- of men who profess allegiance to a political party that was once HITLER's most aggressive enemy. MOHREN, 30, is a miner, the son of a miner who was a communist. When he was 14 he left home and wandered through Germany. In BERLIN, at the age of 15, he fought on the barricades on "Bloody Sunday", (May 1929), when the Social Democratic chief of police fired on the radical workers. MOHREN still remembers that with some bitterness. Next to class violence, he was most shocked by the slums (ELENDSGEBIETE) and poverty around BERLIN. In WUERSELEN, MOHREN, at the age of 16, organized about 60 youths into the Young Communist League. The Nazis dissolved the group in 1933 and threw MOHREN into a concentration camp. His father and an aunt were likewise imprisoned. Because of his youth, he was released after 4 months. He continued his anti-Fascist activities, this time underground. Of the 60 youths in his group, he said, the Nazis succeeded in winning over only about half a dozen.

3. In 1934, he helped organize the KAMPFBUND GEGEN DEM FASCHISMUS (Combat Union Against Fascism) in AACHEN, whither he went nightly. The KAMPFBUND listened to the MOSCOW and the BASEL radios and distributed miniature editions of the ROTE FAHNE which was printed in Belgium. Within a few months the Gestapo ferreted out the KAMPFBUND and destroyed it by incarcerating its leaders. Despite the increasingly efficient Gestapo terror, MOHREN pursued his anti-Nazi activities in WUERSELEN. Any formal organization was out of the question. Anti-Fascist workers, especially those who were friends, met in small social groups, listened to the foreign radio and discussed politics. MOHREN's favorite radio was not MOSCOW, but LONDON. He still remembers with pleasure the broadcasts which THOMAS MANN made over the BBC. "MANN is the kind of person lacking Germany today -- an honest man." MOHREN does, indeed, show an intimate knowledge of large world political events of the last 5 years, a knowledge he gleaned from the Allied radio. He can quote at length from ROOSEVELT, CHURCHILL, and STALIN. He knows about the MOSCOW CONFERENCE, about TEHERAN, about the ATLANTIC CHARTER, about the FOUR FREEDOMS.

4. Throughout the Nazi era, MOHREN's group collected money for political causes. Collections were made for ROT SPANIEN (Red Spain) and for the families of Nazi victims. When a Christian Socialist named BOCK was sent to a concentration camp, MOHREN's friends

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collected money for BOCK's wife. "BOCK", he said, "was not of our Party. But what mattered was that he was an honest anti-Fascist. Formerly we had been enemies, but we became friends in need."

5. Until 1939, the Wehrmacht disdained to take MOHREN. He was considered "politically unreliable" and was given a pass showing that he was not worthy of the honor of serving in the German army. When the war broke out, the Wehrmacht decided that he was eligible for the WEHRGEMEINSCHAFT DES DEUTSCHEN VOLKES (Defense-Community of the German Nation), but he declined the honor of serving in HITLER's army (as a miner he was in a deferred occupation). "Honor?" MOHREN said sarcastically, "what kind of honor -- the honor of serving in a Fascist army? I told them what Liebknecht had said to the reactionary judges when he was tried by them 'You talk of honor, gentlemen. But my honor is not your honor. And your honor is not my honor.'"

6. In the mines, MOHREN said, there was little sabotage. Workers were "not even allowed to be sick." One Dutch miner, ordered by the doctor to stay in bed for 2 weeks, was sentenced to 3 months in an ARBITSLAGER (work camp). Some miners did heed the BBC instructions to slow up their work, but on the whole, this "passive resistance" did not amount to much. "The Germans," MOHREN said in slow, contemptuous tones, "are the cheapest and most cowardly people -- a MISTHAUPEN (manure-pile)." For the German people, MOHREN has boundless contempt, a contempt that he expresses in searing language, as if he were castigating himself. He loathes the Germans for their self-pity, their docility, their cowardice and their slavish obedience. KNECHTSEELEN (slave minded), he calls them. "There are no good Germans," he kept on repeating; "even the workers are corrupted and without guts." The Germans, he said, must be made to pay for their crimes; they must be made to suffer deeply before they are permitted to live among civilized nations. MOHREN's voice trembled as he spoke of what "they" did in Poland-- when he said "they" he meant the Germans, not just Gestapo or SS. "What they perpetrated in Poland puts the Middle Ages to shame."

7. He said that the Germans are now trying to curry favor with the Americans by claiming that they have never been real Nazis at heart, that they were only MUSS-NAZI (Nazis by compulsion). MOHREN dismissed such claims as specious hypocrisy, as typical German crawling. "Must?" he exclaimed. "There is only one MUST -- death. One must only die, but one cannot be compelled to do anything against one's convictions. Those who joined the Nazi Party did so in order to profit from it. I know one blacksmith, a member of the Centrist Party; he refused to join, and for many years he hungered. I take my hat off to him. He didn't profit from Fascism, but he didn't lose his soul either." When he and his comrades used to talk about the "brutality of Fascism," they were laughed at. Only now do the Germans begin to realize that Fascism means death and destruction. "They see that WUERSELEN is a pile of debris, destroyed by the Wehrmacht, and they realize what Germans are capable of. But now the innocent must suffer with the guilty. Let every German city be destroyed like WUERSELEN. Then the people will perhaps learn to cast out from their souls this swinish militarism."

8. MOHREN took us through the RAVENSBURG battlefield, just outside of WUERSELEN, where scores of dead German soldiers were rotting in the mud. As we made our way through the mine-fields, he pointed to the decaying cadavers and muttered, in a voice of inexpressible scorn, "Fascist dung." Before a rotting group of corpses, lying in a twisted heap, he stopped and pointed-- "Look at them-- the Fascist swine. That's the end-product of Fascism: death in a mud-hole." He picked up the corpse of a young officer by the scruff of the neck and said: "You see this thing-- it was a particularly objectionable Fascist swine; it used to strut and boast about its

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Fuehrer..." And he cast the cadaver from him with a gesture of loathing-- "MISTHAUFEN (manure-heap), pfui..."

9. MOHREN is frankly cynical about MOSCOW's use of General von SEYDLITZ and his Free Germany Committee. He is convinced that after STALIN has used the Generals for his purpose-- the overthrow of Fascism-- he will get rid of them. To MOHREN the Generals are no better than the Nazis: After the attempt on HITLER's life on 20 July, MOHREN, for once, found himself in agreement with the Fuehrer -- when the latter shot the Generals. "These gentlemen had supported HITLER in all his Fascist adventures; they marched into Poland with music and drums; they devastated France; they ravaged Russia. HITLER loaded them with crosses and medals. Then HITLER was good enough for them. Now that they know they cannot win, they are turning against him. And such people talk about a Free Germany!" MOHREN is sure that STALIN will know how to treat the Generals as they richly deserve.

10. Although a Communist and an admirer of the Soviet system, MOHREN categorically rejects all idea of dictatorship. "We have had 11 years of dictatorship, and that's enough," he said bitterly. He wants to live in a land where the FOUR FREEDOMS reign, "like your President said in a speech." For him personally, "spiritual freedom is more important than food." He knows, however, that this view is not a German view. "Give the German people bread, and they will cry Heil HITLER. As for me, I want democracy." He is so grateful to the Americans for having come to "liberate" the Germans that he is willing to sacrifice his life in the Allied cause. If given a chance, he would "immediately" put on an American or any Allied uniform and "fight the Germans." The latter, he said, are too cowardly to free themselves; therefore he wants to show "a little gratitude" to those who bring freedom.

11. MOHREN's hatred for Germans is equalled in intensity by his admiration for Americans. Even before the Americans entered WUERSELEN, he did what he could to help them. There was one battery in town which he wanted to seize from the Germans, but he needed the help of 10 comrades. The latter, however, refused to take the chance, and now MOHREN refers to them bitterly as "true German KNECHTSEELE (slave-souls)." After their refusal, he broke the gun he had kept hidden for 11 years in the cellar; with Germans being what they are, no revolution was ever possible in Germany, hence there was no need for a gun. He managed to help the Americans in another way. One day, during the 6-weeks siege of WUERSELEN, 10 members of the SS Leibstandarte asked him to help them desert. MOHREN's motto being "a good German soldier is a dead German soldier", he assisted them in a venture that could easily cost them their lives. He put them in a cellar and scrounged food for them. In the end, they were caught. Whatever happened to them, to MOHREN they were as good as dead; he did not care-- he had achieved his purpose of keeping them from fighting the Americans.

12. WUERSELENITES, MOHREN said, were waiting for the Americans to come and "deliver" them, waiting as if for the Messiah. Daily, people asked: "Where is the American? Why doesn't he come? Why is he not here?" On the morning of 17 Nov the deliverers came. MOHREN was sitting in his room with 4 comrades when his mother announced that German Panzers were on the street. Then neighbors came in with the news that the tanks were American, not German. MOHREN took out a bottle of schnapps and toasted the liberators. A few days later, he offered to pick dead bodies out of the mine-fields and booby-trapped houses. He developed a method of removing the delicate wires from the mines. "Not everybody can do it," He said with some pride. Asked why he endangers his life like that, he replied that he wanted to show his gratitude to the "liberators". As for danger, he

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shrugged his shoulders-- "You can die only once."

13. MOHREN wonders whether this is not, after all, the American Century. He and his comrades have frequently discussed this subject and they think that the United States has something to offer to the world. It would be a good idea to Americanize the people spiritually. He is sure that the Americans are not imperialistic, because they are now fighting Fascism out of conviction. His favorite American authors, by the way, are UPTON SINCLAIR and ZANE GREY. The latter's novels have convinced MOHREN that Americans are gentlemen-- "they treat women like ladies even in the most primitive surroundings."

14. Young MOHREN is bitter without being cynical. He is a Communist who does not seem to know much of MARX and does not accept the idea of dictatorship. There is in him a passion for righteousness and justice, and this sets him apart from most Germans with whom we had any contact. His intense bitterness at his own people derives from his frustration, from his knowledge that the Germans have taken a path that has led them to self-destruction and has earned them the contempt and hatred of the civilized world. He is driven by a tremendous urge to atone for the follies and the crimes of the German people.

Condensed from a report by:

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